

VEGETABLES

The mild winter, cooler spring, extremely dry summer, and warmer than usual fall had an impact on vegetable crops during the 2001 growing season. The spring planting started out early. Temperatures were slightly below normal while rainfall and topsoil moisture was near normal during April and May. Growing conditions and quality of spring vegetables were generally good. During the summer, rainfall became short and irrigation was needed in most areas. Lower than normal temperatures slowed the growth of summer vegetables but summer crop production levels were maintained and in full volume. Prices were generally low because of competition from southern states. Fall planting was lower than the normal level due to dry conditions and low prices. Demand for fresh market vegetables was extremely low after the tragedy of September 11th. As the season concluded, total harvested acres of all fresh market vegetables showed a 2 percent decrease, while total value of production showed a 9 percent decrease from the previous year.

Area harvested for the 11 principal fresh market vegetables in 2001 totaled 28,800 acres, compared with 29,400 acres in 2000; down 600 acres. Production amounted to 4.81 million hundredweight, a decrease of less than 1 percent from 4.83 million hundredweight in 2000. The 11 principal fresh market vegetables are asparagus, cabbage, cucumbers, eggplants, escarole and endive, lettuce (head), peppers (bell), snap beans, spinach, sweet corn and tomatoes. Acres harvested for romaine and other leaf lettuce, summer and winter squash, kale, collards, and pumpkins totaled 8,100; unchanged from 2000.

Among the 11 fresh market vegetables, asparagus and bell peppers had higher harvested acres in 2001 than in 2000, while the other vegetable acres declined or remained unchanged. The total value of production for these 11 crops was \$117 million compared to \$126 million in 2000. This was a decrease of 7 percent from 2000 and was a result of lower level production and season average prices. The sharpest decline in value of production was sweet corn, down \$2.2 million.

When ranking New Jersey's principal fresh market vegetables by value of production, indications showed that Jersey Fresh tomatoes were first with \$28 million and bell peppers were second with \$27.8 million. Sweet corn, cucumbers, and head lettuce, were third, fourth, and fifth with \$15.7, \$9.45, and \$8.48 million, respectively.

Harvested acreage in 2001 of the eight major processing vegetables (tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers, green peas, snap beans, lima beans, spinach, and sweet corn) totaled 10,500 acres, compared with 10,450 acres in 2000. Harvested acres increased for carrots, lima beans, and spinach while acres decreased for green peas, snap beans, and sweet corn. Total production, at 69,660 tons, was a 10 percent decrease from 77,230 tons in 2000. The 2001 value of production at \$9.4 million was down less than 1 percent from \$9.46 million in 2000.